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FOR ACTION

BACKGROUND NOTE AND RECOMMENDATION BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ON THE CRITERIA FOR EXECUTIVE BOARD REPRESENTATION ON THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND/WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION JOINT COMMITTEE ON HEALTH POLICY AND THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION/UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

SUMMARY

The present document has been prepared in response to Executive Board decision 1994/R.1/4 (E/ICEF/1994/13) to address the question of its representation to the UNICEF/World Health Organization Joint Committee on Health Policy and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization/UNICEF Joint Committee on Education in the context of the decisions taken by the Board on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 48/162 of 20 December 1993. These joint committees complement the technical expertise of the respective specialized agencies and the operational strength of UNICEF. The Executive Director recommends that the membership of the two joint committees be restructured.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present paper has been prepared in response to the decision of the Executive Board on the question of its representation on the World Health Organization (WHO)/UNICEF Joint Committee on Health Policy (JCHP) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)/UNICEF Joint Committee on Education (JCE) (decision 1994/R.1/4) and conveys the information requested on the criteria for selection expressed during the deliberation of the Board on the subject.

2. UNICEF is an operational agency which follows the technical policies and standards of the specialized agencies in their areas of competence, utilizing their technical expertise in programme operations where appropriate and when necessary. Collaboration has evolved over time with many of the United Nations agencies and it has been particularly close with WHO and UNESCO, covering the two principal areas of UNICEF operations. A unique form of collaboration between UNICEF and these two organizations has been through the mechanism of joint committees of the two respective Executive Boards to facilitate a high-level exchange of views on strategies, approaches and new challenges in areas of mutual interest. These bodies are the UNICEF/WHO Joint Committee on Health Policy and the UNESCO/UNICEF Joint Committee on Education.

II. UNICEF/WHO JOINT COMMITTEE ON HEALTH POLICY

3. JCHP, on which the Executive Boards of both WHO and UNICEF are represented, was established in July 1948 to advise UNICEF on medical programmes and normally meets biennially in odd years. In the decade following the establishment of JCHP, the shift in emphasis in the joint work of the two organizations led to an increasing need for a review of the functions of the Joint Committee.

Terms of reference

4. Based on the deliberations of JCHP at its eleventh session in October 1958, and subsequent consultations between the two secretariats, the two Boards decided in 1960 to revise the terms of reference of JCHP as follows:

(a) To review from time to time the overall needs of mothers and children in the health field and to recommend to the UNICEF Executive Board the types of health programmes having as their objectives the improvement of the health of mothers and children that could appropriately receive UNICEF support;

(b) To receive and review progress and assessment reports presented either by the Director-General of WHO or the Executive Director of UNICEF on different types of jointly assisted health activities and to recommend to the UNICEF Executive Board any reorientation of health activities that may be necessary;

(c) To consider any other matters of joint interest to WHO and UNICEF referred by the Executive Board or the secretariats of the two organizations and to recommend subsequent action to UNICEF and, when appropriate, on non-technical matters to WHO;

(d) To report to the UNICEF and WHO Executive Boards on the foregoing matters.

The revised terms of reference were approved by the WHO Executive Board at its January 1960 session and by the UNICEF Executive Board at its March 1960 session.

5. Over the years, JCHP has served as the launching ground for many joint initiatives, the most notable being the International Conference on Primary Health Care, held at Alma Ata in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1978. It also began to serve as a forum for policy exchanges and policy dialogue, operationalization of the policies adopted, development of joint and common strategies and review of progress made. It regularly reviewed the implications of the policy decisions of the two Boards and also brought to the attention of the Boards emerging issues and trends in child health and other related areas. The papers submitted for consideration by JCHP are prepared jointly by the secretariats and decisions are reached by consensus. In addition, JCHP played an important role in formulating a set of time-bound health and nutrition goals, which served as the basis for the goals for child survival, development and protection in the 1990s that were endorsed at the World Summit for Children and adopted by the UNICEF Executive Board.

III. UNESCO/UNICEF JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

6. UNICEF and UNESCO have collaborated on projects, particularly in primary education and teacher training, since the early 1960s. At its 1980 session, the Executive Board of UNICEF reviewed UNICEF policies on education and collaboration with UNESCO. At that time, the Executive Board, encouraged by the successful experience of JCHP with WHO, requested the secretariats of UNICEF and UNESCO to explore the possibility of forming a joint committee, drawing from the Executive Boards of the two organizations, to facilitate a high-level exchange of views on policy and approaches and to strengthen cooperation at the country level. Ensuing discussions between the two secretariats at that time, however, were not conclusive. The dialogue was revived again in 1988 and JCE was established by the two Boards in 1989.

Terms of reference

7. The terms of reference of JCE were defined in more general terms, reflecting the emerging form of collaboration between the two organizations. The main purpose of the Joint Committee, which would have no decision-making capacity, was to facilitate a high-level exchange of views on strategies, approaches and new challenges in areas of mutual interest to the two organizations and to expand the cooperation between UNESCO and UNICEF. The Joint Committee would review situation assessments and progress reports presented by both organizations.

8. The Joint Committee would consider matters of mutual interest to UNESCO and UNICEF and could make subsequent recommendations, as appropriate, to the respective Executive Boards for consideration and possible action. Such recommendations would relate to fields of action common to the two organizations

and would draw the attention of the two Executive Boards to new challenges and important trends in those areas.

9. The Joint Committee would hold a regular meeting every two years in even years and could hold special meetings at intervals in between as required.

IV. MEMBERSHIP

10. Both joint committees comprise six members from each of the respective Executive Boards, which also designate them. UNICEF Executive Board members on the joint committees originally comprised the chairmen of the Executive Board and of the Programme Committee as ex officio members, four representatives elected in their personal capacity and two elected alternates. Elections for JCE were to be held in odd years, to alternate with those for JCHP in even years, based on the past practice of a joint committee meeting being held only biennially.

11. However, JCE met twice in its first biennium (1989-1991) and JCHP met twice in its 1990-1992 biennium. Given the foregoing, and in light of the fact that the ex officio members would, of necessity, change annually, the officers of the Executive Board expressed, during the 1991 regular Board session, their concern that a full complement of membership in such joint committees should be guaranteed to the extent possible.

12. Accordingly, in decision 1991/3 (see E/ICEF/1991/15), the Executive Board amended the criteria governing the election of UNICEF Board representatives on both joint committees as follows: "(a) the number of elected alternates should be increased to four; (b) in electing its representatives to the joint committees, the Board should ensure the election of those who represent countries that will be on the Executive Board for at least two additional years".

13. There are no written rules governing the composition of the UNICEF representation beyond the decision of the Board that representatives may not serve for more than two terms consecutively unless they become ex officio members. However, prevailing unwritten conventions developed over the years and generally followed stipulate that due regard should be given (a) to electing representatives who have experience in both the UNICEF Executive Board and in the areas of health or education, as appropriate; and (b) to ensuring a balance between developing and industrialized countries.

V. RECOMMENDATION

14. Both joint committees have played an active and important role in focusing global attention on the health and educational needs of children and women, mobilizing and welding the comparative strengths of UNICEF, WHO and UNESCO. They have also provided forums for high-level dialogue and have been instrumental in developing joint and common strategies and follow-up plans to major initiatives. They have also played an extremely useful role in formulating goals and strategies for the three organizations.

15. In view of the changed Executive Board structure as reflected in decision 1994/R.1/1 on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 48/162 (E/ICEF/1994/13), the Executive Director recommends that the Board approve the following recommendation:

1. Decides to reconstitute the composition of its membership on the joint committees as follows:

(a) Chairman of the Board (ex officio);

(b) Five members, elected in their personal capacity and representing the five regional groups;

(c) Five alternate members elected in their personal capacity from the same country and ministry or department, as appropriate, as the members in order to provide continuity and familiarity with the subject matter, as well as to ensure equitable geographical representation;

2. Also decides that members and their alternates should be senior officials with relevant professional expertise and experience to be able to provide technical guidance and policy advice to the concerned organizations;

3. Further decides that, in electing its representatives to the joint committees, the Board should ensure the election of those who represent countries that will be on the Executive Board for at least two additional years;

4. Decides that representatives may not serve for more than two consecutive terms unless they become ex officio members.

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FOR ACTION

THE UNICEF POLICY FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE, THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES AND THE BALTIC STATES

SUMMARY

The present report provides an overview of the UNICEF policy for Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States. Section I provides a brief introduction and section II discusses the main thrusts of UNICEF policy in the region. Section III describes current UNICEF programme support and section IV the sources of funding for these activities.

The Executive Director recommends that the Executive Board endorse the policy outlined in the present report.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. UNICEF involvement in Central and Eastern Europe, and more recently in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Baltic States, has intensified since 1990, when the Executive Board first approved programme support for this region. In the context of the rapidly evolving economic, social and political transformations of these countries, the Board expressed serious concern about the plight of children in the region. Subsequently, UNICEF was authorized to undertake activities on behalf of children, focusing on (a) advocacy for the development of social policies and legislation in favour of children; (b) initiation of programmes in countries satisfying criteria for UNICEF assistance; and (c) emergency assistance. In addition, the Board urged UNICEF to work closely with other United Nations organizations active in these countries and to draw on UNICEF experience with low-cost technologies and approaches to health, nutrition, early childhood education and other sectors (E/ICEF/1990/13, decision 1990/5; E/ICEF/1991/15, decision 1991/20; and E/ICEF/1992/14, decision 1992/19).

2. Within the framework of this mandate, UNICEF has provided modest but rapid and responsive assistance to children in the region, largely from supplementary funds. Some $12.2 million was expended in 1993, of which $10.4 million was for emergency assistance, in addition to $19.4 million for emergency assistance to the republics of the former Yugoslavia.

3. The economic and social transitions in Central and Eastern Europe, CIS and the Baltic States since 1989 have been more difficult than was anticipated at the time. While varying in degree from country to country, the repercussions of the economic, social and political changes on large segments of the population generally have been severe, in some cases reaching crisis proportions. As documented in a UNICEF regional monitoring report issued in January 1994 entitled, "Central and Eastern Europe in transition: public policy and social conditions", unemployment and poverty are increasing as previously guaranteed access to work and social welfare services disappear. The quality and quantity of health and social services are declining, there have been epidemics of vaccine-preventable diseases, and child and adult morbidity and mortality have increased. The Russian Federation alone has experienced a rise in overall mortality of 500,000 additional deaths per year. Rapid social transitions and associated uncertainties are reflected in declining school enrolment, increases in delinquency and juvenile crime and marked decreases in birth rates across the region, including in countries that already had low birth rates. The rise in nationalism, ethnic intolerance and political instability, as well as the escalation of armed conflict among and within the countries of the region, has exacerbated the situation further. The consequences of all these changes affect children and women most, although the elderly and ethnic minorities also are affected.

4. On-the-ground experience in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), Romania and, more recently, in Central Asia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, coupled with frequent contacts in other countries of the region, have made it clear that serious problems for children are likely to continue for a number of years to

come. Emergency conditions prevail in quite a few of these countries and for the region as a whole, more attention urgently needs to be paid to accomplishing the economic transition with a human face.

II. MAIN POLICY THRUSTS

5. The broad policy directions set by the Executive Board have proven to be appropriate to the transitional needs of the 27 countries of the region. Despite the difficulties inherent in creating a constituency for children in a period of such intense change, experience in the region has shown that UNICEF can be a successful and helpful advocate for children and women with Governments, civil society and with the donor community.

6. Through the integration of emergency responses and longer-term planning, flexibility in facilitating the roles of others and the use of its own technical capacities, UNICEF has been able to play a catalytic role without requiring large resource transfers. The data collection and analysis being supported by UNICEF are providing telling evidence, important for all partners, of the deteriorating social situation in these countries and have drawn attention to the need for a strengthened social safety net and coherent social policies.

7. In many countries, the transfer and exchange of knowledge has proven to be a welcome intervention for population groups that have been isolated from relevant development experiences of other countries and that are eager to absorb new ideas. Through a variety of country, intercountry and regional activities, UNICEF also has played an important role in promoting intersectoral approaches to the identification and solution of children's problems and in encouraging dialogue between Governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the media and other parties, including major donors.

8. As the gravity of the region's problems has become more apparent, there is now a clear need to accelerate programme components and advocacy and to reinforce the UNICEF capacity to respond to the needs of children and women. Given the number of countries involved and the magnitude of the problems they are facing, UNICEF will need to enhance significantly its capacity, both at headquarters and in the field, if it is to respond more adequately to their needs. In all countries of the region, intensified approaches are needed to enable UNICEF to influence social policy for children at this critical time.

9. The new challenges in these countries also have offered new opportunities to ensure strong inter-agency collaboration. UNICEF has established good working relations with other United Nations agencies already active in the region. In a number of countries in transition (Baltic States, Belarus, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and the Russian Federation), UNICEF has initiated a dialogue with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) representative and the resident coordinators on how to move forward on the social agenda for women and children. Cooperation with the World Health Organization in the health sector, particularly regarding vaccines and essential drugs, continues to be a critical element in country programmes. Increasing attention by the World Bank to social sector issues also provides opportunities for UNICEF collaboration at many points during project development and implementation. Similarly, the

United Nations Population Fund, the World Food Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and bilateral donor agencies have collaborated with UNICEF in a number of countries in responding to emergency needs and in undertaking assessments and programme planning. Numerous NGOs have collaborated closely with UNICEF particularly in the areas of information exchange and technology transfer.

III. PROGRAMME SUPPORT

A. Country programmes

10. There is currently no uniform approach on the part of the donor community, and even within the United Nations system, to the classification of countries in transition for development assistance based on their levels of economic and/or human development. As a result, for the countries of this region, the categorization of countries for eligibility for programme cooperation and technical assistance and for establishing appropriate levels of aid allocation varies considerably from one agency to another. For example, UNDP, the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and UNICEF each have different criteria. Because of the fluctuating values of individual statistical indicators (e.g., gross national product (GNP)) for these countries and the rapidly changing conditions in the region, formal criteria of eligibility for assistance have been established by agencies on a case-by-case basis. This is perhaps the most practical approach during this period of transition.

11. In this region, eligibility for UNICEF programme assistance has been and will continue to be assessed on the basis of the criteria that UNICEF normally uses for the allocation of general resources: per capita GNP; under-five mortality rate; and child population. On this basis, the Executive Board in 1993 approved short-term "bridging" country programmes for Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, as well as a supplementary-funded programme for Romania. These programmes will continue through 1994 and five-year programme recommendations for these countries will be presented to the Executive Board in 1995. Two-year "bridging" recommendations, mostly for supplementary funding for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Georgia, are being presented to the Board at its second regular session of 1994. Programmes for other countries may be presented to the Board in 1995. These will be financed from both general resources and supplementary funds. Other countries in the region will be considered for transitional or emergency assistance as part of a proposed regional strategy (see paras. 13 and 14 below).

B. Emergency support

12. UNICEF has participated in consolidated inter-agency appeals launched by the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Tajikistan. Emergency activities of this nature will continue to be undertaken in close collaboration with other United Nations agencies. Advances

from the Emergency Programme Fund also will enable UNICEF to respond quickly to urgent health and other needs in these countries. In addition, UNICEF will continue to provide assistance to help to meet the urgent needs of women and children in various republics of the former Yugoslavia.

C. Regional strategy

13. A regional apprcach will be required to complement the country programmes and support staff working at the country level. In consultation with government leaders and experts in the areas of child health and welfare, many high-priority problems and themes common to the region have been identified. These relate especially to the rapidity of the transition, the erosion of earlier safety nets and social service structures and, more generally, the consequences of the economic severity of the process. Within this context are many priority areas for UNICEF action, including assistance in the development of new social policies and legislation using the Convention on the Rights of the Child as a framework; the development of national programmes of action as priority agendas for children and as follow-up to the World Summit for Children; special measures for the protection of children in the current very difficult circumstances; monitoring of social indicators; and building on existing services and infrastructures and the region's well-developed human resources to design more effective interventions in health and to develop promotive and preventive health approaches. In the light of these commonalities and the need to maximize the limited resources of UNICEF, the Executive Director proposes that UNICEF develop a regional strategy and a programme of regional technical support to complement country-level action.

14. To facilitate this task, especially at this critical transition stage, and to promote greater efficiency in the use of existing resources, the Executive Director plans to create a regional support team headed by a director. Temporarily, until an appropriate regional field structure in line with UNICEF operations in other regions can be put in place, the regional team will operate from New York headquarters. This will enable the Executive Director and the deputies to provide close guidance to the team, in consultation with the Secretary-General, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and UNDP, as it develops and executes UNICEF cooperation in the region. Staff for the regional support team would, for the time being, be redeployed from existing resources. Being in New York, the team will be able to draw upon the existing staff and resources of various headquarters divisions and thus avoid having to establish significant new operations at another location which could not be done without substantial additional budgetary allocations.

IV. SOURCES OF FUNDING

15. While UNICEF will require additional capacity and resources to help meet the needs of the countries concerned, the Executive Director believes that this can be done without any significant diversion of resources. Although a higher funding level for the region is clearly essential, supplementary funding should be the main source for an increased level of activities. The supplementary funding to be requested, however, will not be in direct competition with funds

for other countries, as many donors have funds set aside expressly for countries of this region.

16. A detailed proposal for both administrative and programme requirements will be presented to the Executive Board in 1995 as part of the administrative and programme support budget for 1996-1997, the global funds programme budgets and relevant country programme recommendations.

V. RECOMMENDATION

17. The Executive Director recommends that the Executive Board adopt the following draft recommendation:

The Executive Board

Endorses the UNICEF policy for Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States as outlined in document E/ICEF/1994/L.12.